

Colchester County Council Election Coverage
Presented by **The Shoreline Journal**

As my first term comes to an end, I want to say "thank you" for giving me the opportunity to represent you as the District 9 Municipal Councillor. As I take a moment to reflect on where I started, feeling as much like a "fish out of water", as one can, I feel I have gained confidence in my decisions and have learned to ask a lot more questions.

I take pride in the working relationships I have made with fellow councillors and Municipal staff. Their guidance and expertise have helped to shape who I am.

I believe that every voice matters, and that includes yours. Over the past few years, I have had the privilege of meet-

ing many of you and listening to your concerns. Whether it is about public safety, parks and recreation, housing, or food insecurity, I want you to know I am here to advocate for your needs and ideas and try my best to get the information you need.

My vision for District 9 is one where we can all work together, where families can thrive, businesses can grow, and every resident feels safe and valued.

As we approach the election on October 19th, I urge you to get involved. Your vote is your voice, and it matters!

Thank you for your support, and I look forward to continuing to work together for a better future.

Marie Benoit, incumbent, for Municipal Election District 9 (902) 324-9011, mbenoit@colchester.ca



Marie Benoit

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assessment all property assessments would automatically have risen by the amount of the consumer price index. Given the impact record inflation over the past 3 years drove up the consumer price index. The Municipality should have seen record growth in tax revenue.

The province did as well (I will speak about that later) This revenue growth is a two-sided coin. With growth comes increased costs in demand for services, additionally the cost of providing those goods and services would have increased similar to the consumer price index therefor that part is mostly a wash.

The real growth is in the new homes and the renovation of older homes. In Colchester North it is my view the vast majority of the population growth has come from other provinces. For the most part have been young families who have moved to Colchester North for a better quality of life. Our rural communities have really benefited from that. So this is where I have headed with this article!

For years our rural communities were declining. We had an aging population and most of the new growth was in the urban core. We were fighting to keep our schools open and losing services like local stores and service stations. Now I understand some schools are close to capacity. I am repeating myself but until recently most all the growth was in the urban core and as such much of the Municipal focus was on that urban core. Well, that has changed! Across Colchester North, as well as, across Nova Scotia rural communities are growing, young families want our quality of life. I am very fortunate to have the opportunity (power of the pen) to put my view out there.

I am preaching to Candidates in the upcoming Municipal Election both Mayoral and Councillors. It is time for rural communities to get a new focus. When I first went to council I was regularly told "well we don't get much revenue down there, we have to focus where the growth is". I do not believe that is true today, not sure if it was true the last few years I was there. When the council returns or is formed, again I urge all members, new or returning to recognize that the demographic of Colchester County is changing! We need those quality-of-life services such as recreational and social

in rural Colchester County. I know it will be a battle, I fight that every day. Again, I commend all candidates for putting your name forward. All the best!

I said earlier, I would also comment on the Provincial role of our population growth. Provincially this growth is a bit different, in my view, in that our rural growth has mostly been interprovincial while the majority of growth in the towns and city is international. Regardless, as with Municipalities, growth brings challenges and opportunities. Without question population growth has created challenges. Challenges in housing, we all know; Increased demands on Health Care; Education schools; roads, you name it.

There are also tremendous benefits as well. As Premier Houston has stated many times over in the past two weeks, we have a strategic plan and goals. We want Nova Scotia to grow and prosper. Population growth is essential to maintain and grow our much-needed public services. Much has been said publicly about the value of immigrant doctors and health care, long term care workers and skilled trades. All desperately needed to ensure we have the services we expect and require. Where would we be without them!

Additionally, these new Nova Scotians play a very significant role in our economy. An increased workforce creates revenue and as a result our revenue has increased accordingly, which has allowed us the begin to transform and modernize our health care with record investments. Our schools with almost a billion dollar investment plan for new schools and major school renovations. Historic investments in housing and millions in additional investment in roads.

In my view, having grown up in a small rural community that was declining, closing schools and losing services continually, growth is needed.

I love growth, and optimism!

There will be bumps along the way but we are growing and moving forward.

Tom

Tom Taggart, MLA, Colchester North can be reached at tom.taggartmla@gmail.com or (0) - 902-641-2335

News from our Provincial Council - Dave Ritcey

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ital health transformation that includes YourHealthNS, virtual care, e-referrals, the Care Coordination Centre, the Oncology Transformation Project and the One Person One Record clinical information system.

Newborns Now Screened for Spinal Muscular Atrophy

Newborns across the Maritimes will now be screened for spinal muscular atrophy (SMA), through a genetic test added to the Maritime Newborn Screening program.

The screening, done at birth, will provide early diagnosis and access to care sooner for infants with the disorder.

The screening program expansion, which took effect Monday, August 19, is a partnership between the Province, the Maritime Newborn Screening program and Muscular Dystrophy Canada.

Muscular Dystrophy Canada committed \$420,000 for equipment, training and validation work to begin screening for SMA, a genetic condition that leads to muscle weakness. It affects three to four newborns in the Maritimes each year. It is now one of 24 conditions covered by the screening program.

Spinal muscular atrophy testing supports the government's commitment to precision medicine, which provides healthcare teams with information to understand conditions better and to support and guide early treatment.

Action for Health Data Updated

Nova Scotians can now see updated healthcare data on the Action for Health website. The latest data, from the first quarter of 2024-25 (April 1 to June 30), shows ongoing positive trends in several areas, including consistent reductions to the surgi-

cal wait list and staff vacancy rates, and a high number of long-term care admissions.

The government is making progress on each of the six broad solutions to improve healthcare in Nova Scotia laid out in the Action for Health strategy. All actions outlined in the strategic plan are now underway and their status has been updated.

The Action for Health website is updated quarterly: <https://novascotia.ca/actionforhealth>

Highlights from the last quarter include: Nova Scotia's second medical school campus is on track to open in the fall of 2025 with 30 first-year seats, with a focus on practising in rural Nova Scotian communities; Nova Scotians being treated for cancer and dealing with hair loss can get help with the cost of a wig through a one-time rebate of \$300; four new magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machines and a partnership with a medical imaging company will improve access and reduce wait times for patients; eligible Nova Scotians living with diabetes can apply for funding to cover the cost of sensor-based glucose monitoring supplies; residents of Pugwash and the surrounding area have better access to healthcare with the opening of the new North Cumberland Health Care Centre; cancer patients and others in Cape Breton will get enhanced care closer to home with a new PET-CT scanner for the Cape Breton Regional Hospital and the Province will cover full tuition for more than 460 people who want to become a primary care paramedic or emergency medical responder.

Dave Ritcey is MLA, Truro-Millbrook-Bible Hill-Salmon River. He can be reached by telephone at 902-897-0884 or by e-mail at mlaritcey@bellaliant.com

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